

Evacuation II — Safety Tips for Emergency Travel

“Keep your car in good working condition.”

In times of emergency, people often panic, either staying with or abandoning their cars at the wrong time. After almost every disaster, search and rescue teams find victims who might have survived if they had been prepared for emergency travel, and had known whether to stay with or leave their cars.

Hurricanes: Evacuate Early

Before you leave, have your car checked. A thorough safety check should include:

- ignition system
- battery
- lights
- tires
- cooling system
- fuel system
- exhaust system
- heater and air conditioning
- brakes
- wiper blades and windshield washer fluid
- coolant or antifreeze
- high grade oil and other lubrication

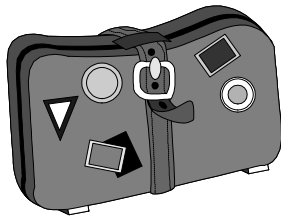
Select alternate routes before you leave, in case your preferred route isn't passable. Listen to the radio as you travel, and heed the latest weather information. Seek shelter immediately if the storm seems severe.

This document is IFAS publication DH 304.

Adapted by UF/IFAS from:
Document DH-022,
IFAS Disaster Handbook for
Extension Agents (developed
by the Cooperative Extension
Service for the benefit of
Florida's citizens)

Try not to travel alone during a storm. Two or three people traveling together can provide mutual aid. Travel with another car if possible. Make sure someone knows where you are going, when you leave, the time you expect to arrive, and your expected route.

Always fill your gas tank before leaving, even for short distances. Drive defensively. Carry an emergency kit. This should include:



- blankets or sleeping bags
- matches and candles for light
- empty coffee can with plastic cover to use as a toilet
- facial tissues and paper towels
- extra clothing and waterproof gear
- high-calorie non-perishable food and can opener
- bottled water
- compass and road maps
- knife
- first aid kit
- flashlight or signal light with extra batteries
- booster cables
- fire extinguisher
- portable radio with extra batteries
- tools: pliers, screwdriver, adjustable wrench, shovel, traction mats
- flares
- booster cables

Never attempt to drive during a hurricane or until the all-clear is given after the storm. Flash flooding can occur after a hurricane has passed. Avoid driving on coastal and low-lying roads. Storm surge and hurricane-caused flooding are erratic and may occur with little or no warning.

Floods and Tornadoes: Get out of the Car

Floods and tornadoes often accompany hurricanes. Do not try to stay with your car under these conditions.

Never attempt to drive through water on a road. Water can be deeper than it appears, and water levels can rise very quickly. Most cars will float dangerously for at least a short while; during this time they can be buoyed by floodwaters and swept downstream in a flood. Floodwaters also can erode roadways, and a missing section of road—even a missing bridge—will not be visible with water running over the area. Wade through floodwaters only if the water is not flowing rapidly and only in water no higher than the knees. If a car stalls in floodwater, get out quickly and move to higher ground. The floodwaters may still be rising and the car could be swept away at any moment.

A car is the least safe place to be during a tornado. When a warning is issued, do not try to leave the area by car. If you are in a car, leave it and find shelter in a building. If a tornado approaches and there are no safe structures nearby, lie flat in a ditch or other ground depression with your arms over your head.

If Trapped by a Storm

- Avoid overexertion and overexposure.
- Stay in your car where you are sheltered and more likely to be found.
- Stay calm.
- Keep fresh air in your car. Keep the downwind window open about an inch if you run the motor.
- Exercise from time to time by clapping hands and moving arms and legs vigorously. Don't stay in one position long.
- Keep the dome light on at night to make the car visible to rescue crews.
- Have one person keep watch. Don't allow everyone in the car to sleep at once.
- Signal with the horn. An automobile horn can be heard for as far as a mile downwind. Flash your lights from time to time at night.